

[George T. Martin]

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FOLKSTUFF - RANGE LORE [50?]

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Rangelore.

Tarrant Co. Dist., #7

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George T. Martin, 72, living at 916 W. Peach St. Fort Worth, Texas, was born July 11, 1865 at Atlanta Ga. His father, Jack Martin, moved his family from Atlanta to Dallas, Texas in 1870.

George T. Martin went to Denton Co. in 1880 and secured work on the cattle ranch owned by "Red" Robinson. He remained with the Robinson's ranch for four years.

After he terminated his employment with the Robinson's ranch, he and his brother, Jack, gathered a herd of wild horses, broke the animals to the saddle, and drove the herd to Little Rock Ark, at which place they sold the horses. Martin continued in the horse selling business during the remainder of his active life.

His story of his range life follows:

"I have lived in Texas, since 1870. My father, Jack Martin, moved his family / from Atlanta Ga, in that year and settled in Dallas, [Texas?]. I was born at Atlanta July 11, 1865. /

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"My father labored at any kind of work that he could get to do when we first lit in Dallas. The Civil War sort of tore things up for father back in Atlanta, so he came to Texas calculating on getting a new start. Soon as I was able to go on my [own?] I lit out to find a job and dragged up to Denton Co. which contained a tolerable lot of small cattle ranches in those days.

"I landed a job with the "Red" Robinson outfit, which was located eight miles North of Denton on Denton Creek. There I got my learning of the cow business. I nested with that outfit for four years and then went on my own in business.

"I was a greener of the first water when I landed on the Robinson's outfit. The only thing that I could do was sit in a saddle, but to ride a hoss was out of the question unless the hoss was an easy saddle.

"After I had been there for a couple of weeks my brother C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 Jack dragged in. He was a greener too, so each of us lads learned and broke into the cow business together.

"The range life then didn't stack up with home life, with a good bed to bunk in and a mother to fuss over fixing the chuck to suit and such we jankered hankered for, but the work got into my blood and I couldn't leave it. I stayed with the cattle and hoss business so long as I was able to work.

"The Denton county range was a brush country and that kind of a range is no picnic to work. It takes better roping, riding and more gizzard [?] to stay with the brush range. It is harder to herd critters and easier for the rustlers and because of that it took more watching.

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"Robinson's brand was 'RR', but he had many different brands besides his own on his range, because he did a lot of buying and selling all the time. The brand condition on the 'RR' made it a good spot for the brand artist to work.

"The 'RR' was not a large outfit, it run around 2000 head, more or less according to Robinson's selling and buying activities. Robinson worked from five to ten hands, depending on the season. Nigger Joe was the cook, there was my brother, myself, John Muson and Joe Jones which made up the steady crew.

"We slept in a ranch house and ate in a cook shack most of the time. During the roundup, and occasionally other short spells, we slept in the open and ate our [chucksquatted?] on our haunches around the chuck wagon.

"Our chuck run strong to beef and beans. The beef was not considered as costing anything, because the country was full of 3 cattle and when some beef was wanted a waddie would rope a fat yearling and never look at the brand. What was a fact, generally the best looking yearling carried the brand of of some other ranch. Besides beef, we would have wild game, when ever the cooky took the notion, or one of the waddies would decide to vary the meat deal, they would go out and shoot some game. Our bread was biscuits, sourdough, or corn-pone. We had some vegetables which came in the can, dried fruit and all the black coffee we [called?] for. The cooky would regularly fix upsomething for our sweet tooth, such as fried pies made from dried fruit, pudding of some sort and once in a while a cake.

"Nigger Joe was a good belly-cheater, and knew it, but the boys use to hossplay him a lot, all in fun, and he would hossplay us back. We generally got the worse end of the play, because he would load some dish we hankered for with red pepper, or some sweet dish with salt. Once he made a cake with cotton strewed through it. To try and eat that cake sure put sadness in your heart, but we had a tolerable lot of fun about it when we discovered the cause of our eating trouble.

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"During my breaking in period was when the boys were put on the op'ra several times.

"After I had been with the outfit about a month I got to thinking that I was a pert rider. I did catch on fast, but not fast enough for the bunch, or fast as I calculated. The old rawhides ribbed me up about my riding ability getting [meready?] for the show. One morning Jones told me he wanted to surprise the waddies by havingme / ride a hoss that the other waddies didn't think I could ride. 'I want you to show them and I will [win?] some money which I'll 4 split with you', he chinned to me. That swelled me up like a carbuncle.

"The bunch saddled a hoss from the remuda and trotted it out. I was ready and lit in the saddle. The hoss evelated when I hit the saddle and then started back to the ground, but forgot to take me along. I was left so high up that the birds had time to build a nest in my pocket before I hit the ground.

"After that experience I figured that I needed a couple more grades of schooling in hoss riding, and that I got before I had spent many more weeks there. Jones gave me some pointers which fixed me up.

"One time the boys sent me out to get a "Wouser", that was supposed to be in the creek bottom, because they fered that it would get some of the critters. My instructions were to stay after the animal until I located it and got a shot at it. The boys said: 'If the animal was shot at it would leave the section pronto, but kill it if you can.' The animal was discribed as having a body similar to a calf and a head similar to a wolf. I left to locate that "Wouser" early in the morning and stayed with the job until dark, but nary a glimps did I get of the critter. I came into the camp sort of shamed of myself, because I had fell down on the job. I reported how I had watched and sneaked quietly here and there. While I was telling the tale, I noticed that all of the bunch was mighty interested and noticed some smiles. It then came into my conk what had been pulled on me. I then sure enough was riled for a bit.

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"After about three months I had gone through all the rackets and was a real rawhide. I was able to ride 'em, rope and do all the 5 other jobs tolerable well. I got to be a real brush rider. Riding in the open range with no brush is sun shine on a winter's day compared with working in the brush. When a rider is high-tailing it through the brush, it is necessary for him to swing from side to side dodging limbs, trees and brush. Then when a waddy can ride in the brush and at the same time smear a loop on a critter, that waddy can call himself a cow hand. To smear a critter running in the brush one must be able to handle the loop from any position.

"We were compeled to keep close watch for the rustlers and they were hard to keep up with, because the brush gave the varmints plenty hiding spots.

"Robinson did his own top-screwing and his standing orders were to make buzzard food out of any rustlers that [weknew?] for sure was rustling our critters.

"The 'RR' ranch was located about 20 miles North of '[?]' the biggest rustling outfits in the country, the hidden pasture, which was owned by Sam Bass. During my time on the 'RR' we never found that the Bass outfit bothered any of our critters. Sam's long suit was hosses and that was what he ranged on his place. He called at the ranch many times and I met him often while riding the range, but he never seemed to be bothering critters. Sam was a sociable fellow and I always enjoyed to meet up with him. The fellows that gave us the trouble came from other section of the country.

"We had a number of scrimmages with the rustlers, and some of these never rustled any more critters unless it was done on the eternal range.

"One day a couple fellows were spied in the Denton Creek 6 of our range and a party of us waddies went in after them. We surrounded the boys and then closed in on them. We demanded an explanation for their presence there. They were not working in that section of the country and had no pumpkins in that creek bottom. They gave us a speel about

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jiggling through the country and wanted to camp and rest a few days. That sounded likely, but we decided to investigate after we parlied about the matter, so took the boys and their hosses to the camp where the strangers [?] could be watched. There was line riders on duty night and day, so watching was no trouble. They could not leave with their hosses without the line riders spying their move. That night the two strangers left on foot, leaving their hosses, saddles and all other rigging. Therefore, we calculated that two rustlers got away.

“That affair caused a shooting a little later on. There were two more fellows found in the bottom and put up about the same kind of a speel, only them fellows said they were hiding out, but not for any cattle rustling business. Jones wouldn't accept that chinning and was for hanging them up to dry, but my brother, Jack, was plumb sat against the drying process until the boys were investigated. Jones held that we were fooled by two rustlers which [gave?] us a chinning and he wasn't for letting two others do the same. My brother held that being we had no more on the boys than that they were in the bottom on our range, where it was out of place for them, we should look into the matter before putting them up to dry. Then two waddies got plumb riled and one word followed another, finally Jones said: 'To hell with you' and [?] [?] pulled his gun and started to shoot the two strangers. My brother 7 drew his gun and shot Jone's gun out of his hand. The rest of us then grabbed the two waddies to keep them from craking down on each other and while we were busily engaged in that matter the two strangers made their mounts and high-tailed out of the section. Robinson ordered that, from then on, all strangers we came upon like/ that they should be brought to him for a decision of the issue.

There was a young lad, whos father had a small ranch a few miles West of the 'RR' outfit, that we all hankered to hand up to dry one time. That young fellow caused one of the worse stampedes I ever had to deal with.

“It happened during the dark of the moon one night when we could not see well. The critters were the longhorn breed and could run about as fast as a hoss, and were full of the

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running notions especially when fretful, because of weather conditions, lack of water, or feed. That herd had all the water and grass it could take and the weather was pretty. The herd was bedded down chewing on the cub as contended as any bunch of critters could be.

“My brother and I were night riding at the time, when we suddenly head a strange noise off a distance. It came more louder steadily and we could tell it was coming our way. Finally it was passing us. It was that lad with a cow hide dragging at the end of his rope behind his hoss. He had found a dead critter somewhere, skined it and was taking it home, but doing it, as a boy will do, the wrong way.

“The herd rose, as a flock of ducks do leaving the water, and were off. They went at top speed through the brush. When that herd hit the brush, it sounded as trees do when falling. Riding orders 8 were given to all hands telling them to get going, but with all of us working it was impossible for us to do anything with that herd. For one thing, it was dark and we could not see where we or the critters were heading and in addition they had been scared loco, so all we could do was to try and hold the critters together.

“It was a hard job for us waddies to keep in touch with each other and work together trying to keep the herd from scattering. In doing that we didn't know if we were with the herd or a bunch scattered away from the main bunch. To know where each other were we would shoot our gun twice. The first shot would attract attention and by looking in the direction of the sound the fire flash of the second shot could be seen, which would enable you to tell where a rider was.

“The animals slowed down after a spell, but kept going until daylight and only about half of the herd was together.

“The whole crew worked two weeks picking up strays. We found some up in Wise Co. some in Dallas Co. and some in Tarrant Co. Part of the crew worked a whole month

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picking up strays and when we quit hunting there were still 100 critters missing and never were located.

“That night my Brother got with 50 stray critters which strayed from the main herd and he stayed with the bunch. It was about one in the morning when he got the bunch milling and the animals finally settled down. He didn't know where he was, so just had to wait until daylight before he could herd the critters back. He was younger than I, but for a kid, as Robinson said, showed he was made of the stuff needed to be a cowhand. He stayed there until daylight, but spent 9 most of his time sitting on a limb of a tree. The wolves got to howling and that put pinples on his back, so kid like, he staked his hoss and went for a tree. When daylight came he then drove the bunch of 50 critters into the camp and was the [only?] one of the whole outfit that came in with strays. Robinson bought the kid a [Old?] John B. Stetson conk cover for doing that job, saying 'you are a kid and a greener, but [bested?] the rawhides. You came in with a bunch of strays, which is the important work'.

“My brother and I stayed with the 'RR' outfit for four years and at the end of that time I was a real hoss wrangler. My brother and I decided to go into the hoss business.

“Our first [venture?] was to get 200 wild broncoes from the West, bust those for the saddle and then drive the hosses to Little Rock, Ark. That was my first experience on a drive. All the time that I nested with on the 'RR' outfit Robinson never made a drive to market. He sold all his cattle to them that did make drives, or put his herd in with some drover that was driving to the market.

“After my brother and I wrangled the 200 hosses we started to Arkansas. We sold about 50 as we passed through the cattle country and had 150 hosses when we landed at Little Rock, those we sold off in two weeks. We received around \$40 a head for the hosses, which was around \$10 more than we could get for a saddle broke bronco in Texas.

“We used a crew of six waddies on that drive and averaged about 20 miles a day.

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"We made a nice piece of money [??] that deal. The hosses cost us only the time and expense of catching and busting the 10 them, which we calculated cost around [\$5?] a head. Our net profit, after paying all expenses of the drive was about \$30 a head. That put us in the hoss business right. We wrangled wild hosses until the animals couldn't be found handy then delt in tame stock.

"I became a hoss trader in later yeras operating in Dallas, and my last years in the business was at Fort Worth.

"My brother and I would trade or sell anything that had four feet and looked like a hoss. We learned to know hosses so well that when we were [bested?] in a trade it was an accidnet.

"We had many incidnets, during our hoss trading days, that tickled our innards. As a rule the talktive, bragging and smart buckaroos were the hardest [squawkers?] when they got bested in a swap. It always put my gizzard to shaking to have one of the smart gents come back squawking.

"My brother was the gent that handled the squawkers. I want to tell of a couple funny deals he pulled, which got me to laughing every time I think of how he handled the howlers.

"We had a fair looking critter that a fellow was wanting to trade for and my/ brother kept telling the man my hoss don't look good, but is a good work hoss. We made the trade and that fellow was bested a-plenty. We knew by the fellows actions that he was a squawker and sure enough he returned howling blue murder, saying, 'that hoss is blind as a bat. 'Sure', my brother answered. 'Didn't I tell you the hoss didn't look good'.

"We swapped a hoss once that died the next day after the trade. The critter was a fine looking animal, but it took frequent spell which indicated a bad heart and was, of course, was likely to kick the bucket any moment. 11 "We made a trade of that hoss and the squawker thought that he had put it over us a-plenty, but the next day he learned different

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and came back [howling?] his head off, saying, 'that hoss died a few hours after I got him'. 'That's funny', my brother answered. 'Why, that hoss never did that before'.

"We were hoss traders and in the business to make a living. The fact that we were making a living should have indicated to all folks we knew our hoss trading business, but the people were bent on beating the socks off of us, and would come to us for a trade with that intention. Then they would howl when we bested them.

"Well, I had heaps of fun and made a good living out of it, but all that I can do now is enjoy thinking about the past days.